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Space Vehicles Directorate

Air Force Research Laboratory

FACT SHEET

The Space Countermeasures Hands On Program (Space CHOP)

Space CHOP is a unique program within the Department of Defense that is designed to emulate the terrorist and asymmetric threat to US military and critical infrastructure systems.

Special mission teams are brought to Kirtland to work against a specific United States target. The mission teams typically consist of Air Force Lt's, although junior officers from other services and comparable grade government civilians are also considered who assume the role of adversaries for four to six months. Mission team members are restricted to open-source information and receive no inside knowledge of US systems by virtue of their military or government status. A team typically consists of four members, none of whom have experience on the system they are assigned to analyze. Three of the four team members have a strong technical education, and the fourth member typically has a managerial/business education and is on the team to provide balance. Team members gather information on their assigned target system and then use their new-found knowledge to propose ways to disrupt or defeat the system. In essence, the team members act as scientific detectives. Space CHOP studies complement the traditional "first-world" vulnerability assessments traditionally provide by intelligence organizations, red teams, and aggressor squadrons. This gives the leadership the full spectrum of vulnerability analysis.

Space CHOP resides in AFRL, but receives its basic funding from the Space and Missile System's Center's Space Superiority Program Office (SMC/SYT). Additional funding, which is usually little more than transportation and temporary lodging costs for the team members, is provided by each mission customer. Customers have included: Headquarters, Air Force Space Command (HQ, AFSPC); the United States Space Command (USSPACECOM); the Space and Missile Systems Center (SMC); the 527th Space Aggressor Squadron (527 SAS); the Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL); the 21st, 30th, 45th, and 50th Space Wings; etc. Customers are not restricted to the Department of Defense. Space CHOP recently completed the first of a series of missions for the Department of Energy.

Space CHOP has consulted with various other agencies, including the United States Strategic Command, the Space Warfare Center, the Space Battlelab, the Air Combat Command Navigation Warfare Center, the US Navy Space Warfare Center (SPAWAR), the Missile Defense Agency, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the United States Customs Service, etc.

Space CHOP provides an early career broadening opportunity for its future leaders, and gives the current leadership an inexpensive, but invaluable, insight into the asymmetric capabilities of potential adversaries.

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